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ABSTRACT

This transcript for the National Public Radio's weekly program "Options in Education" concerns American libraries and their patrons. Several interviews provide descriptions of the Library of Congress, an explanation of copyright regulations and the challenges of photocopying, and a personal view of the role of lobbyist for the American Library Association. A number of children discuss their selections of library materials, and the Director of the New York Public Library discusses its financial situation. (KB)

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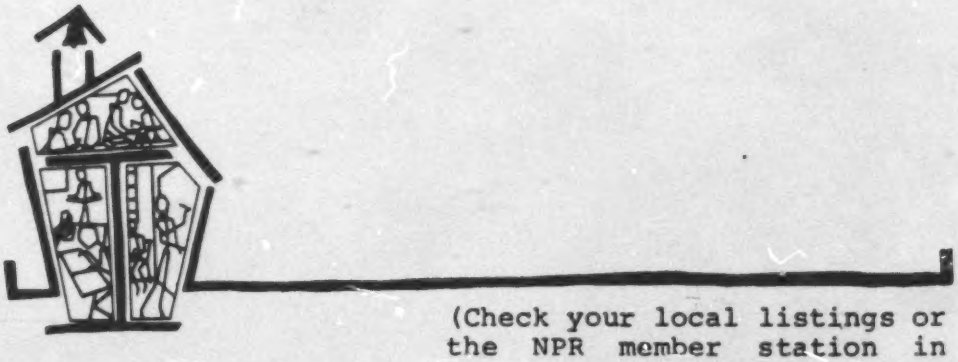

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LIBRARIES

(Opening Theme)

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair with NPR's OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a news magazine about all the issues in education - from the ABC's of preschool to the alphabet soup of government programs. If you've ever been to school, we have something that will interest you.

MAN: I can talk to anybody in history, instead of listening to the tripe I hear in newspapers or the radio or the television. I can go to the smart men in history and see what they said.

MAN: I'm not working -- this is my only form of entertainment.

MAN: It's a nice atmosphere if you want to get away from the noisy city and things like that and, yet, you're in the city if you want to be there. There's so much.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow. Those three men have one thing in common -- they all love the Boston Public Library. A recent Gallup poll showed that more than 40 percent of Americans visit their library at least once a year, and book circulation is up by about 10 percent. That's a lot of interest.

BLAIR: So, this edition of OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is about libraries - the people who run them and the people who use them. Libraries are institutions of tradition -- yet, they are changing drastically. And they aren't just silent places anymore. Computers click and records and films blare in some corners. An information explosion is upon us, too -- the total amount of information doubles every 10 to 15 years, and it's the job of librarians to sort through it all, organize it, and help us to use it.

MERROW: We thought a good place to begin our look at libraries might be the largest library in the country, so we sent Tim Cox to the Library of Congress here in Washington.

TIM COX -- SOUND PORTRAIT OF LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

COX: We're standing here in the main reading room of the Library of Congress, and one cannot begin to describe the incredible beauty of this room -- the dome overhead, the six pillars around the edge which are connected by arches, and on top of each pillar is a statue of a woman who represents one of the great fields of human endeavor. We have commerce - we have history - we have art - religion - and above each statue is a wreath, and above each wreath, words on each subject:

Commerce -- we taste the spices of Arabia, yet never feel the scorching sun which brings them forth.

COX TO WOMAN IN LIBRARY: Can you tell me what kind of feelings you have about this place?

WOMAN: There is silence, which is being disrupted by this very interview. It makes me a little nervous, because I don't like to

talk in libraries. There's a sense of a tradition of scholars sitting and reading in these large reading rooms, which takes me right across the ocean to Europe and to scholars of many centuries ago.

WOMAN: It's very foreboding -- you have a feeling if you don't do your work, it's all going to fall in on you or something.

MAN: Well, the problem is not the 17 million titles which the library has, I suppose, but the influx of materials into the library, which is coming in at the rate of one item every three seconds of every working day.

MAN: This is the Archive of Folk Song in the Music Division of The Library of Congress where there is just about the biggest collection of folk music anywhere in the world. Some of them go back quite a way in time -- and we have the very first field recording ever made. It was a cylinder made of the Passamaquoddy Indians in March of 1890. There are discs of all kinds, quite a hodgepodge of stuff. And we have a good time sorting through it. There are several art people who come in here and visit us, including some scholars and some singers. And Odetta, for example, spent quite a bit of time in here listening to some of these very same recordings that we have playing in the background now.

So, if someone is interested in the recollections of a New York State lumberjack, they might come in here to the Archive of Folk Song. If they're interested in the recollections of a Secretary of State, they should go to the Recording Sound Section. The offices are adjacent -- we work very closely together, of course.

MAN: My name is Dan Burney, Assistant to the Chief, Rare Book and Special Collections Division. In that collection, we have jeweled bindings, two-volume sets, magnificently done Morocco with animals, a snake with a jewel in the eye.

MAN: As a building, it's the most incredible building in Washington. This is not wallpaper on the ceiling -- this is handpainted, and everything you see, although it's highly decorative, is symbolism.

MAN: At present, the Library of Congress contains about 17.5 million books and pamphlets. We also collect things that no other library begins to collect, at least not with the vengeance we do with 8.5 million prints, photographs, negatives, slides -- posters are also included in this -- we have 3.5 million pieces of sheet music, 3.5 million maps, graphs, and charts -- 400 thousand records -- 250 thousand movies, everything from "Deep Throat" to "Jaws." We have the largest microfilm collection in the world of a million point five. We also collect something called microfiche, which will hold about 3,000 pages. At present, we thought we were going to outfox ourselves -- this was going to be the new thing to replace microfilm -- with about a million point one of the microfiche. And then, we thought we were going to outfox ourselves again. And we started collecting something called ultra-microfiche which can contain about 5,000 pages, and we have about a million of those.

We have fifty thousand comic books -- we receive about 2,000 comic books a day, but you have to be 18 to go into the comic book reading room. We keep in the building about 50,000 pieces of

Braille and about 15,000 talking books. We have the largest collection of miniature books in the world, 4,000 of the smallest books ever printed. Some of them can fit on the end of your finger, and then, we have the Audubon elephant books that you have to take six librarians to turn the pages. That's the largest collection of "stuff" ever assembled on the face of the earth, since the beginning of recorded time.

MERROW: NPR Reporter Cox with a sound portrait of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

(MUSIC -- "Marion Librarian")

BLAIR: The librarian in that song is the romantic heroine in the "Music Man." She is prim and proper. Now, we're not saying that librarians aren't like that today, but they have a few other qualities as well -- like being computer and microfilm experts. And some of them are named "Mike" instead of Marion.

MARILYN GELL: Eighty percent of the library profession is still female.

MERROW: You say still -- is it changing?

MARILYN GELL: Yes.

BLAIR: That's Marilyn Gell, Director of Libraries for the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. She talked with John about the history and changing role of libraries.

MARILYN GELL

GELL: Public libraries were originally developed by the ruling class, in this country as well -- the Brahmans at the time. Boston was one of the first places to have a really good public library, but one of the things I think is interesting is that the role of the public library is changing so much. Originally, it was to keep people off the streets and to help them be good citizens and good people.

MERROW: And now?

GELL: And now, that still is in the philosophy, but I think more than that, there is an interest in providing information -- all kinds of information -- the telephone reference service, for instance.

MERROW: What do you mean, the telephone reference service?

GELL: Well, people — anybody -- you -- can call up.

MERROW: I can call a library and ask a question?

GELL: Sure.

MERROW: And they'll answer it?

GELL: What would you like to know?

MERROW: I'd like to know something about harpsichords -- who are the prominent builders of harpsichords.

GELL: Yes, you can call for that.

MERROW: I can call for that?

GELL: Sure.

MERROW: Let's call a library.

GELL: Okay.

MERROW: I just happen to have the number of the Pittsburgh Library.

GELL: All right, I hope they have the makers of harpsichords.

MERROW: Can I ask another sort of mundane question, like what was Rogers Hornsby's lifetime batting average?

GELL: Sure, yeah.

MERROW: Okay -- (DIALING) -- Hi, can I be connected to the reference service, please.

VOICE: Line's busy -- will you wait?

MERROW: Yes, I certainly will. Thank you. What if they fail us in Pittsburgh?

GELL: We should try somebody else.

MERROW: This is not set up. I feel sort of like Candid Camera.

GELL: Yes, and I'm going to be run out of the profession. More practical things can be asked, too.

MERROW: A practical question like what?

GELL: The relative merits of different kinds of refrigerators -- consumer questions, or referral questions, like what agency should I talk to about getting rid of the rats in my alley -- census information -- I call them for that a lot.

(PHONE RINGING)

MAN: Library - reference.

MERROW: I have a couple of questions -- they're not really related, but I'd like to get both pieces of information, if I could.

MAN: All right.

MERROW: One is -- my neighborhood has rats, and I wonder what agency in the city I should call.

MAN: Okay, hold on one moment. I can help you with that one. You can talk to the county -- there's a rodent control agency within the county at 355-4046.

MERROW: Rodent control - 355-4046. Thank you -- that only took you a minute to get information. I do have one other question. It has to do with a bet I have with a friend, about the lifetime

batting average of a former Pirate, Honus Wagner. I was saying it was 355, and my friend is saying it's 341.

MAN: Okay, one moment.

MERROW: I hope one of us is right.

MAN: He played professional baseball for 21 years, and ended up with a batting average of 328.

MERROW: .328 -- we were both wrong.

MAN: Right.

MERROW: Thanks very much for looking those up. I am curious -- do you get a lot of sort of off-the-wall questions like that?

MAN: All day long.

MERROW: Is that right? That's your job, to respond to peoples' questions?

MAN: Right.

MERROW: And who calls you up -- do you have any idea?

MAN: Everyone.

MERROW: I should tell you -- I'm sitting in a radio studio -- National Public Radio in Washington. I'm talking with a librarian, and she told me that we can call a library and they'll answer our questions. And I said, "Oh, come on." And she said, "No, pick a library." And, so, the engineer is from Pittsburgh. So, we called Pittsburgh, and sure enough, it works.

MAN: Yeah, most large libraries have a reference service available through their main library.

MERROW: Well, you certainly helped us a lot. What's your name?

MAN: I'm Mike Morino.

MERROW: Well, thanks very much -- Mike Morino of the Carnegie Public Library in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

MAN: Right -- thanks, bye.

MERROW: Bye. Well, it works. We got an answer to my question. That's a kind of outreach -- do libraries do other things like that?

GELL: Yes, libraries are becoming a much more important part of the community, a more central part of the community. It's the, again, where-can-I-go-for-help-with kind of question.

The whole attitude, the protective attitude toward books, is disappearing. Paperbacks have become very much a part of the collection in public libraries. I think that's important in the context of this discussion, because it makes it possible for a library to buy many, many copies of very popular books.

Actually, from an economic point of view, you can buy, circulate, and throw away after a few circulations a paperback book at less of a cost than you can buy, process, and try to maintain strict control of, a hardback book.

MERROW: Who decides what books a library buys?

GELL: The librarian, in general, based on budget, and other constraints.

MERROW: How does the librarian make the decision? I mean, it can be run down the best seller list- or is it?

GELL: A good librarian knows the people that use the library, is familiar with the kinds of things they need, the kinds of information they need, the kinds of books they like to read. Libraries, indeed, have the answers to approximately 80 percent of the questions that people normally ask, but then, people don't think about, in general, calling the library for the information.

MERROW: In the future, what's a library going to be like, particularly in reference to books? Will books be on microfilm and microfiche, and will we all have machines at home that will project them on the wall?

GELL: I don't really foresee doing away with books, real books that are large and you can carry around with you, and you can read on the train. I think that that kind of thing is going to be supplemented by computer data basis, which are already available -- the search services -- I think transmission of information will certainly happen in all kinds of exotic and wondrous ways.

MERROW: Well, is it conceivable that you could have information -- research information -- produced on microfilm and microfiche transmitted -- everybody could have their own terminal, and you could punch in what you want, and it would come out in front of you. And all that information could be conveyed without anyone's ever having to go to the library, but the library would do the work. The library would be the "switching place," if you will. So, libraries will be a place where nobody will ever go.

GELL: Oh, I hope not.

MERROW: Well, I hope not, too, because here we go back to that notion of fantasies -- I remember thinking of libraries as the place where you'd meet the person - you'd meet the girl of your dreams, in my case, and you'd kind of walk through the stacks, and you'd be peering at titles on one row and you'd see through the space, because the books never come up to the top above the next shelf, and you see through it, you know, a pair of beautiful brown eyes, or blue eyes, or what have you. And your eyes would meet, and you'd strike up a conversation -- and I don't know what happens next, because it never happened.

GELL: Oh, I think that's great. I think that's reason enough to keep them.

MERROW: Marilyn Gell, who's Chief of Library Programs in Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

(MUSIC -- "Dangling Conversation")

BLAIR: John visited a library recently and spoke with a boy named Peter, who picked out a book about war and bombs.

MERROW: Tell me, how come you want to learn about bombs?

PETER: Because they explode so much -- I want to see what's inside them, and I want to see what happens during the war.

MERROW: Tell me what you know about war.

PETER: I know they shoot guns and cannons, and airplanes drop bombs.

MERROW: How come they do all that, do you know?

PETER: Because they want to get somethin.

MERROW: What do they want to get?

PETER: Anything.

MERROW: What do you think happens when a bomb drops on you?

PETER: You get killed.

MERROW: When you grow up, do you hope you can fight in the war?

PETER: No.

MERROW: How come?

PETER: I'd like to be the ice cream man -- he comes around every night -- sells ice cream in his truck.

MERROW: Oh, you mean like selling ice cream -- popsicles, you mean?

PETER: Yeah, the Good Humor man.

MERROW: How come you want to be an ice cream man?

PETER: It's nice to sell ice cream. You know, you have a lot of friends, too. You see 'em every day.

MERROW: But I don't think you'd have very many friends if you went around dropping bombs on people.

PETER: No, you wouldn't.

MERROW: Tell me again about why you want to get these books about war -- it looks like you've already made up your mind you don't want to be in a war.

PETER: I'd like to learn about it.

MERROW: How old are you?

PETER: Six.

MERROW: Thanks, Peter. Bye.

(MUSIC -- "Questions")

BLAIR: Children have questions about everything, and any parent can tell you they're not easy to answer. Human reproduction, for example, is described in a variety of ways from the "birds and the bees" or "the stork" -- to very clinical explanations. Filling a library with books that answer students' questions without offending some parents is not easy. Censorship is an increasing problem for librarians. Betty Culotta, President of the Montgomery County, Maryland Education Association has been a librarian for 18 years. She describes the subjects which create censorship controversy to NPR Reporter Tom Steward.

BETTY CULOTTA

CULOTTA: I think that they're fairly typical throughout the nation. There are specific titles that come to mind, but the areas really are dealing with sex. There are those that deal with religious matters and the separation of church and state that arises about some of those. And we have ones currently that deal with sexism. We've been through protests over things like Manchild and the Promised Land, for example, on people who disagreed with materials on race, on Black people, in particular. We've been through Black Like Me.

We have had in Montgomery County a number of parents who have questioned the validity of a book called Go Ask Alice, which deals with the experiences of a teenage drug addict. We have had over the years protests over -- in the State of Maryland, for example -- one of the ones where a media specialist/librarian got fired. It was over Brave New World a number of years ago. We had Little Black Sambo -- in other words, protests over a variety of titles. All of them, however, have not been removed.

STEWARD: So, you're saying that, not only does censorship involve keeping a book off the shelf, but also taking a book off the shelf that has already been on.

CULOTTA: Yes -- you see, we're very fortunate. Or I feel very fortunate that in Montgomery County, Maryland, people assumed that academic freedom needed to be safeguarded by having open, well-known procedures through which you not only approved and selected material, but by which someone could register his difference with that. We have what is known as the request for re-evaluation - any parent, any teacher, any student, may file a request for re-evaluation.

STEWARD: It must be a complex process, taking a book off the shelf, or deciding which book goes on the shelf, if it's controversial. Where does that process start? Does it usually start in the home? Does a kid bring a book home, or where does it start?

CULOTTA: Well, there are several different ways. You know, this is the day and age in which people now feel that -- some of them -- feel a great deal of zeal about cleaning up the collections for all peoples' children, not just for their own. And, so we do have instances, not only in Montgomery County, but also throughout the

nation, where parents or other citizens, go into our media centers and into our media classrooms to scrutinize materials. In other words, it's actually an active search for whatever this thing may be.

One parent objected to her child reading Death of A Salesman.

STEWARD: What in the world is wrong with Death of A Salesman? Or why can't the teacher answer questions about that book?

CULOTTA: Well, I think the teacher can answer questions about that book, but that doesn't mean that the teacher can mandate that a parent's child continue to read that book.

But the question about Death of A Salesman is that there's a scene in there where one of the characters -- or there's a part in there in which there are dealings about Willie Loman with a prostitute, and a parent objected to the child's reading a book that contained a character that was a prostitute, although those words are said all the time. You know, for some of us, this seems a bit far out, but for that parent, it was really legitimate. But there are others -- A Separate Piece has been one -- the relationships among young men -- any hint of homosexuality. There are some hot topics in peoples' minds, and they do not believe the school has the right to expose their children to some of these things that are routine, I guess, but we do not eradicate prostitutes by eradicating a child's ability to read a novel. Nor do we eradicate homosexuality, nor can the parent by ignoring its existence.

The issue does not go away -- the debate does not go away. It may mean that the child is less able to understand the debate.

BLAIR: Betty Culotta, President of the Montgomery County Education Association talking with Tom Steward.

MERROW: One recent flare-up of the censorship issue occurred in Levittown, Long Island. Parents in a largely Italian neighborhood there convinced the local school board to remove books like Slaughter House Five by Kurt Vonnegut and The Fixer by Bernard Malamud. NPR Reporter Robert Krulwich phoned one of the parents, Julia Chiapaglione about her concern over such books.

CHIAPAGLIONE: We don't want them to read them -- understand what I'm trying to say.

KRULWICH: Well, tell me, though -- these books were in the school library, right?

CHIAPAGLIONE: They were in the school library, and the Board of Education took them out, and was going to read them itself. If they were all right, they'd put them back, if not, they took them out. And some parents feel they should stay in the library, and some parents feel they should be taken out. I feel this way: If you want your children to read any kind of a book, you can buy it for them or go to a public library, but I feel they should not be in a school library where all our children are exposed to that -- understand?

KRULWICH: Yes -- let me ask you a question: If a kid goes into a drug store or in a public library, like you say, all these books -- a lot of these books are probably on the shelves, so, what's the difference between the drug store and the school library?

CHIAPAGLIONE: There is a difference. They shouldn't be in the schools. A school is supposed to set a good example for a fine education and teach children right from wrong. Now, I'm not going to ask you for an opinion, but I feel this world is crazy enough today. They're exposed to so much -- they don't need to be exposed to any more.

KRULWICH: But how did you decide which ones you didn't want to have on the shelves?

CHIAPAGLIONE: Whatever had those pages in there, they shouldn't be in there. If they've got anything to do with sex or cursing or anything like that -- you know, what I'm trying to say?

KRULWICH: Yes.

CHIAPAGLIONE: Let me put it this way. Today we give our children an education to what- to try to better them, to make them have a good education, right?

KRULWICH: Right.

CHIAPAGLIONE: Now, if anything goes in school, then, what's left in this world? School and church and home -- I feel all this should be left out. Are you a parent, or are you single?

KRULWICH: I'm single.

CHIAPAGLIONE: Okay, when I was single, I didn't know what it was to have children and responsibilities and to try to teach them. And it's a very, very cruel world these children are growing up in today. There's a lot of good, and vice versa. Now, why expose them to this in school, if they don't have to? You know what I'm trying to say?

KRULWICH: What about those people who would say that you can't teach people from right and wrong unless you show them a little wrong, so they can distinguish one from the other?

CHIAPAGLIONE: Oh, honey, excuse me for saying that -- they know right from wrong, these children. I know that any child is going to try to do something and to get away with it and try to lie -- know what I'm saying?

KRULWICH: Uh huh.

CHIAPAGLIONE: But why is this so important that this should be in school?

KRULWICH: If you're asking me, I don't know the answer. What do the parents who want it in school say?

CHIAPAGLIONE: Well, they can go buy it. They told them that at the board meeting -- why don't they go buy these books and give them to their children, or give their children permission to go to a public library and take them out, and then everybody's happy -- not in a public school, where we don't want them.

KRULWICH: Well, obviously, you must have a lot of people who think the same, because when they had an election -- tell me if I'm right

on this -- but you recently had an election for two members of the board, both of whom wanted the books out of the library, and those guys --

CHIAPAGLIONE: Were elected in.

KRULWICH: Were elected in.

CHIAPAGLIONE: Right -- there are a lot of people that feel like me. If they want to drink, then go into the store and buy the beer, but does that mean we have to have it in school to make it easy for them?

KRULWICH: Well, the only thing I can think of is that the argument would be that, if you have it in school, it can be discussed, and you can think about it, without having to just take it raw.

CHIAPAGLIONE: When we went to school, we didn't have it, and I don't think we're so bad off. All right?

KRULWICH: Okay.

CHIAPAGLIONE: Bye bye.

KRULWICH: Bye bye.

MERROW: Julia Chiapaglione talking with Reporter Robert Krulwich.

(MUSIC)

MERROW: Okay, Carmen, what books you got?

CARMEN: When I Grow Up.

MERROW: You have a book in French?

CARMEN: I know -- Comment allez-vous?

MERROW: Do you read French -- Parlez-vous francais?

CARMEN: Oh, oui, oui.

MERROW: Looks like you have two sports books. What's your favorite sport?

CHILD: Basketball.

MERROW: Who's your favorite basketball player?

CHILD: Jabbar.

MERROW: Yeah, Karim Abdul Jabbar -- how come you like him? He's a little taller than you are.

CHILD: Oh, that's why I like him, because he's the biggest man I ever saw.

MERROW: It's called The Little King, The Little Queen, The Little Monster -- which are you? You're the little monster?

CHILD: No, the little queen.

CHILD: The name of the book is The Call of the Wild.

(MUSIC - "Questions')

BLAIR: What makes some children avid readers, while others have little interest in books? Parents have a lot to do with it. That's the opinion of Dr. Nicholas Long, a child psychologist in Washington. Long believes that the information explosion is causing a change in our reading habits. Parents are the first casualties, and their children may be victims, too. Dr. Long told Craig Oliver of station WAMU that most of us are learning less about more.

DR. NICHOLAS LONG

LONG: Parents, to a large extent, have given up reading anything in depth, that there is a move toward condensed versions, short versions, summary versions, so that when you hold conversations with an informed person, you can usually have sparkling conversation for about three minutes. And then after that, their information and understanding of that particular subject runs dry.

OLIVER: It's based on the information you received on the evening news for ninety seconds.

LONG: That's correct. We're constantly expected to broaden our view, and the television has been one way of promoting this -- adults who have moved away from reading and have turned to the television as a primary source of information, then serve as models to their children.

OLIVER: If parents don't read, then their children won't read.

LONG: Just about that simple. If parents say, "I want you to read," and will give children books and encourage children to the library, but the adults themselves do not read. Or, more important, do not enjoy reading, because that's what the child fuses with -- the underlying value that we show in a variety of ways.

Then, the child is not going to take that on as a form of behavior. I mean, who wants to go through the Christmas Carol? Now, the Dickens story is very hard to read -- it is not easy to read. But if you can read it, it's very exciting. It's much more meaningful and memorable if you read it than seeing the cartoon version of it on Saturday afternoon.

OLIVER: Do parents still read to their children when they're very young?

LONG: I think that parents do read. I'm certainly not saying that we're an unreading society. In fact, I think there are probably more magazines in the homes now than probably ever before. The books are around -- they come in every week. The magazines are available, but what does the child see? He hears his parents saying, "I'm going to read," except he doesn't really see his parents read in a systematic way.

BLAIR: Dr. Nicholas Long, talking with Craig Oliver of station WAMU in Washington, D.C.

MAN: Welcome to RIF. Today, you students of class 103 get to choose two books -- any two books you want.

BLAIR: "RIF" stands for "Reading is Fundamental." RIF committees throughout the country are trying to arouse curiosity in children about books. John went to a public school library on "Reading Is Fun Day" and asked school children about the books they chose.

MERROW: What books did you pick?

CHILD: How to Care for Your Dog -- A Book For Me to Read.

MERROW: Sounds to me like you're learning to read, like you're doing very well.

CHILD: Yes, thank you.

MERROW: Do you like to read?

CHILD: Yes.

MERROW: It's just about the most important thing to learn, you know that?

CHILD: I could learn things from it.

MERROW: What books do you have?

CHILD: Florence Nightengale -- Mushrooms . . . .

MERROW: That's a great combination.

CHILD: Yeah, I guess.

MERROW: What books did you get?

CHILD: Story of Electricity and Magnetism and Time.

MERROW: You sound like you're going to be a scientist.

CHILD: Well, I like to read books like this, of science -and time I would like to know about if I get stranded somewhere.

MERROW: How old are you?

CHILD: Eleven.

MERROW: Thank you very much. What's your name?

CHILD: Louis Fernando-Venores.

MERROW: Thanks, Louis.

(MUSIC)

MERROW: We've been hearing for some time that school children don't read very well. But at a recent meeting of the Missouri Education Association, speakers said schools may be doing a better job than we think. Dr. Roger Farr, a reading specialist at Indiana University, explained to Mark Poindexter of station KCUR in Kansas City.

DR. ROGER FARR

FARR: The overwhelming picture, when you look at it over a long period of time -- from, let's say, 1920, if you want to use that as a starting date, until today--is that the average reading ability of children in the United States today is vastly superior to any time in the past, and it's not just that the average is going up -- but the lowest achievers are performing better and the middle achievers are performing better, and the top achievers are performing better.

POINDEXTER: Farr thinks the news media may be partially to blame for the belief that the quality of reading achievement has taken a nose dive.

FARR: We contacted, through the International Reading Association, the Today Show, and the Today Show people said that, "Gee, that wasn't really as newsworthy as if we could say that kids, in fact, are reading a lot worse -- what is the problem? And to say that schools are doing a good job, and that reading achievement over a long period has increased, wasn't newsworthy."

We finally did get an article in the New York Times by a fine education writer by the name of Gene Mirnoff. However, when that article appeared in the New York Times, the headline to that article said that "Researchers Find that Reading Scores are Declining in the Last Five Years," and buried in our finding was a statement that said, "Over the long haul, things are on the increase, but maybe in the last five years they're leveling off -- we don't really know. That's a short period of time to look at, and we're really very hesitant about that conclusion." That was the conclusion that was picked up in the headline.

POINDEXTER: For National Public Radio, I'm Mark Poindexter in Kansas City, Missouri.

BLAIR: Encouraging people to read and use libraries means keeping them up to date, and that means money. Public librarians say that federal support of libraries isn't keeping up with rising costs. The current level of federal spending through the U.S. Office of Education is about two and a quarter million dollars, but most of this goes to school libraries. Also, the use of enormous amounts of information creates new problems for libraries and for authors. "Copyright" is a hot topic now, complicated by the advent of the photocopying industry. John spoke with American Library Association lobbyist Eileen Cook about the pending copyright bill.

EILEEN COOK

COOK: This piece of legislation has been underway, going through the legislative channels since July 20th of 1964, so this has been introduced and died, and introduced again in another two years.

MERROW: What's at stake in copyright?

COOK: What's at stake here affects broadcasters, it affects librarians, it affects authors, and it affects publishers.

MERROW: It's the Xerox machine that has made all this necessary.

COOK: The Xerox machine, and technology in general.

MERROW: Now, let's get this down to the nitty gritty. Suppose I've written a book, which is copyrighted. I, obviously, as the author, don't want people to go to the photocopy machine, or the Xerox machine, and just make copies of it. So, I would want some kind of restriction on that. What are the other positions? Who's arguing against my very sensible question?

COOK: Well, I would say that some of your colleagues here at NPR, the television studios, are among those who would argue on the other side -- and librarians and teachers, for fair use.

MERROW: They don't want to buy my book -- they want to Xerox ten pages, or a hundred pages?

COOK: Let's not say they don't want to buy it. I think they want a little sneak preview, an appetiser, if you will, so that they would ask under the fair use provision to be able to make a copy of, perhaps as much as a chapter, or maybe just a page, but something from the teacher's point of view that they could hand out to each member of the class to say, "Here's something you ought to know more about."

MERROW: So, there's the rub. I don't mind if one broadcaster makes a copy of ten or fifteen pages, but what if a hundred teachers, or a million teachers?

COOK: The teachers talk about taking advantage of the teachable moment.

MERROW: But there are other figures in this little battle -- what about the librarians themselves, where do they come down, on my side or your side?

COOK: The librarians are in a different position than the teacher. They're not asking for multiple copies. They're asking for the right to make a single copy of something for the man that rushes in off the street and says, "I'm double parked outside, or my meter is going to run out, and the library is going to close, do you suppose I could get a quick page photocopied or a copy of an entire article from this new current magazine that you aren't going to let me take out -- I don't have time to sit down and take notes, but I'm going to give a speech tomorrow, and I'd like to quote this."

There are varying points of view. People say they don't stop at that, and he's going to copy more than he should. But over the course of this twelve year period, or thirteen, that the copyright revision bill has evolved, publishers and authors have come to view the proliferation of photocopying machines as really a policing job that no one can do, let alone a librarian where you have a shortage of staff. So, they have now in the latest bill said: "Photocopying by the user that comes into the library is not something that the librarian should be responsible for."

MERROW: You're so sane and sensible sounding, but I forget you're a lobbyist -- you're working for one of those interest groups, for the American Library Association. What does a lobbyist for libraries do, besides sound sane and sensible? Who are the Congressmen, Senators and Representatives, who are friends of libraries?

COOK: I would say over the years names like Senator Lester Hill and Carl Perkins, who is now the Chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee. He comes from the Pikesville, Kentucky area and is concerned about bookmobile service to people in the hills and hollows of Kentucky, and knows how important it is to have access to information.

On the Senate side, Senator Powell is a name well known to the library community and to education in general, because he's the Chairman of the one and only Education Subcommittee they have in the Senate. The House has two or three committees. Senator Magnuson of Washington . . .

MERROW: You've mentioned the Senators and Congressmen who are normally considered friends of education. Does this go together -- supporting education and supporting libraries?

COOK: Yes -- with all the trends out towards continuing education, I think it binds us even more closely together.

MERROW: Don't you argue about money? For example, in the Washington metropolitan area, 31 percent of the local budget goes for education, and one percent goes for libraries.

COOK: Yes -- that one percent is prevalent all over the country. If you've been reading anything about general revenue sharing, that's one of the bills that's before Congress now for extension. The mayors and the governors have been lobbying, and even though libraries have been mentioned as one of the priorities -- and education is not, except at the state level, they get about one percent, because the competition is very keen. We have a hard time competing with sewers and streets and fire departments and police departments with the ability to provide more and more hardware for crime surveillance and that sort of thing. So, we don't even compete with education when it comes to revenue sharing, but we get about one percent of the money. And by we, I mean local public libraries.

MERROW: That's true around the country?

COOK: Around the country -- it's not an aberration at all. Right now, in the last year the average adult book has gone from $14.09 to $16.19. That's average. When you get into law or medicine or any of the more esoteric fields, the price just skyrockets.

MERROW: We talked about the "good" guys, Ms. Cook, who are the "bad" guys? Who on the Hill doesn't go out of his way or her way to support libraries?

COOK: I would say in this respect libraries fare very well -- there aren't any "bad" guys, per se, because libraries are a public service sort of thing. I think something like libraries, motherhood, and the American flag -- they're in that area where people aren't against them.

It might be benign neglect is our problem, but it's not out and out opposition. It's just everybody's for libraries, so there are cases where nobody does anything. They leave it to George.

We somehow haven't convinced the Office of Management and Budget that libraries are important. They have too much of a book-keeping mentality, in the public accounting sense -- not the books on the shelf. But they feel that, if you're going to put a federal dollar in there, what's going to be the benefit -- that there ought to be an even balance. It's that we've rung this up on the cash register -- what's the cost benefit ratio? And, like many of the arts and humanities programs, or the funds that go into public broadcasting, you can't always show that there's a direct return. Sometimes, it's a long-range benefit. You say by encouraging poor children to come to Story Hour and get acquainted with books that they've never had in their own families, that they learn the importance and the fun of reading -- and, therefore, are encouraged to learn to read, and not to say it's dull and there are other ways to learn off the streets. You don't get a chance to really show if something is going to prove itself if you have to do it every year.

MERROW: Let's talk about you. What does a lobbyist for libraries do? Do you have a typical day?

COOK: Yes, today was a typical day. I went to a 7:30 breakfast of the Committee for Full Funding of Education Programs. You asked if we aren't in hot competition with educators -- this committee came in to being in 1969 with the first Nixon budget. I think as a result of this we have worked much more closely with the education community, the whole education community.

In the good old days, before I got started, I'm told that each group would come up on their own, and the Congressman would say, "Well, I'm all for your program, but tell me - we can't get out of line here - what can I cut?" And just unwittingly, the educator would say, "I don't know much about libraries -- it seems to me they could do with a little less." Or the reverse person would go in, and the Congressman would say, "What did you ever do to librarians, or what did you ever do to my friend so and so?" So there was this tendency of a kind of dog-eat-dog mentality -- if you're not going to do anything for me, why should I help them?

MERROW: And, so, the Committee for Full Funding brings all those roots together.

COOK: Brings them altogether, and so, what we try to do, when an appropriation bill is going to be on the floor, we tend to go around, not necessarily hand in hand, but we go in groups representing a cross section of education -- and sit down with the Congressmen.

MERROW: So, lobbyists really do that -- they go from door to door, make appointments, go talk to people?

COOK: Yes, very definitely.

MERROW: All right, after the breakfast for the Committee for Full Funding, what then? What was the rest of your day?

COOK: Then, I had a very interesting visitor, a woman representing a group of citizens who are developing a committee to help save libraries in general, and the New York Public Library in particular -- people

who are very much anxious to primarily have Congress sensitive to the plight of the New York Public Library, which has some 84 branches -- now, in name only -- I believe it's about thirty that have been closed. And this isn't just a unique situation for New York. The Detroit Public Library about six weeks ago closed all of its branches -- 27 branches. But I think you'll find stories coming out of more and more of the big cities, where their tax base has eroded. . .

MERROW: Ms. Eileen Cook, who is the lobbyist for the American Library Association here in Washington.

> JOHN CORRY: I remember a vociferous member of the public who said, "Cut our police and cut our fire departments. We'll take our chances on safety, but don't eliminate our hope -- our hope for self-education and our hope for self-advancement are inherent in New York City and more important to us than mere safety."

MERROW: That's John Corry, Director of the New York City Public Library. Benign neglect is too mild to describe what's happening there. This enormous institution is touted by supporters as the most used library in the world, but it's suffering because of that city's financial problems. NPR Reporter Robert Nathan spoke to Corry about the effects of budget cutbacks in New York City.

JOHN CORRY

CORRY: City cuts over the past four or five years have resulted in a fifty percent reduction in the number of public service hours available. We know that in times of economic stress and unemployment library use goes way up, and normally, we would have expected our use to double within the past two or three years. Instead, up until last January it has held remarkably steady. One of the standard measures of library use is the number of books circulated for home use, and that has stayed remarkably steady, around ten million, for several years. To some, this means that we didn't need to be opened those extra hours, because we've maintained our volume of use, despite being closed half the time. To us, it means that our use would have gone up by fifty or a hundred percent had we been open enough hours to accommodate it.

NATHAN: What's the current budget of the library, of the entire system, and what would it have to be if you had to pick an ideal budget?

CORRY: Our total budget for the branch libraries and the research libraries' general purpose and special purpose funds is over three million dollars a year. I suppose that's half of what it should be on an ideal basis, but we spend most of our time trying to keep our budget from being cut.

NATHAN: You've been with this library for a quarter of a century. Do you see the public attitude and the governmental attitude towards financing of libraries has changed significantly?

CORRY: Well, I guess it's been an up-hill battle, but I will comment specifically. One of my predecessors used to say that administering the New York Public Library was a series of minor crises, punctuated

by an occasional major crisis. We've changed that in recent years to say a series of major crises punctuated by an occasional minor crisis. I remember being told a few years ago that we didn't have any vocal constituency, that nobody believed that users of libraries cared. We had always leaned over backwards letting the community groups arise on their own and proceed to press the city officials, without our knowledge or connivance, thinking that that was the honest thing to do and the most effective thing to do. But we've realized that under present pressures that we have to participate jointly with the community groups. First of all, they have to know that we care, and we have to tell them that their caring is more important than our caring -- we have self interests.

MERROW: John Corry, Director of the New York City Public Library. One of the landmarks of the New York City Library is the Frederick Lewis Allen Room, where many authors have written their best sellers. For example, Theodore White's Making of the President books, Nancy Mitford's biography of Zelda Fitzgerald, and The Power Broker by Robert Caro were written in that room. Robert Nathan spoke to the current resident of the Frederick Lewis Allen Room, David Lowe.

DAVID LOWE

NATHAN: How important has the library been to you in your work -- could you do your work without this library?

LOWE: You couldn't do work here without the library. It absolutely has to be done here, and it's an incredible institution, because it isn't parochial at all. It's a national library, and it has such incredible collections, such as the Astor and the Tilden and others. And the Lenox was started long before this library was actually a public library.

NATHAN: How many books have you done in the research division of this library?

LOWE: A book on Braques and a book on the architecture of Chicago, which Houghton recently brought out, and something like 60 magazine articles from "Mary Cassatt" to oddly enough "Churches of New England," but the research for every kind of thing like that is here.

NATHAN: Have the cutbacks in time affected you at all?

LOWE: I think for anyone doing research it is a kind of rhythm that starts, and if you want to, it's nice to be able to work until 10:00, because as anyone knows, writing and research is not a nine-to-five job, and for libraries suddenly to be put on that schedule and be closed -- I mean, a few years ago this library was open every day of the year except Christmas. When I first started here, I think it was open 80 hours a week, and it's now open 43 or 34. And that is serious, because some days you want to work till 10:00, and creative work is not something done on a time clock.

NATHAN: Have any cutbacks, besides the cutbacks in hours, affected your work?

LOWE: You're very aware that the collections aren't being kept up the way they used to be. The incredible thing of doing historic books in

this library is that the marvelous, eccentric, and curious people over the years who bought for this library bought everything, and that is why if you go to a public library, what there is of it, in a city like Chicago or Detroit or Cleveland, it isn't even a library. It's a circulating library. This is a full research library, and the collections were total, and so, it's very hard to say what book is important to a researcher in twenty years.

Today, I notice that in books in the last ten or fifteen years, there is not that enormous breadth that used to be in this library. Every so often now, I find if I'm doing research, I can't find a title. And the second thing is, if I go to another city to do research, I'll see an important title that they have because it's a local book that this library should have. And I'm more and more aware of that, of books of the last ten years.

The library is very important to New York as a cultural resource, the same way that people come here because of Lincoln Center and the theater and museums; the library is a great attracter of writers, who then attract rich people who want to live in New York. And we don't want the Library of Congress, which is getting a good deal of Congressional money, to become the leading library in this country. Up to now, the New York Public Library has been the greatest research library.

I remember last year going up to Harvard to do research, and after looking at the New York public catalog, the Harvard Library, which is a great library and by far the largest college library, looked like a branch library. And it's as important as the subway system, well-paved streets, or police protection -- this is another amenity of living in New York.

BLAIR: Libraries in Boston, New York, and Washington are enormous institutions with lots of resources. But one small school library in Arkansas has imagination.

LIBRARIAN: We'll have the food ready, and would you like to take a book? Look over here, this is a book. It's called Gerbils And Other Small Pets -- let's look at the table of contents here. See, it has about rats. I'm going to let you check this out and, of course, you'll learn a lot about the rat by just having him at home.

Hello, Elmer -- like your tummy scratched?

CHILD: He says, "Hello, Miss Dixon."

LIBRARIAN: Yes, you are a pretty girl.

BLAIR: What you've just heard is a child checking out a white rat from the library. A book accompanies the animal along with a cage and food for the weekend. Librarian Rose Baker explains how this unusual lending program teaches children about all sorts of things, including the "birds and the bees." She talks to Charles Cromwell of KASU in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

ROSE BAKER

BAKER: We had a sign up -- Quiet - Mother at Work, and the children would peak in the library every few hours: "Has mama produced yet?

Any babies yet?" And then Mother did have some, and of course, they did come at night when we weren't around. They come fully with hair, and their eyes are open, and they just scamper around almost immediately upon birth. So, we had mama in a glass aquarium with the little babies, and this way the children could see the new ones and watch them develop and grow. By looking at the equipment and by the things that these little animals do -- for example, the little hamsters have a round plastic ball that they can exercise in. You know, this is a learning situation - that all animals, including people, need daily exercise. And we have found that the pets are very good for the children to get them to come to us.

I can think of one little boy who has been in our school now for two years, and because he was behind in his reading, he was shunned by his peers. He was definitely what we would call an isolate, but certainly a very winsome little boy and a very lovable little boy that just seeked out and wanted somebody to care for him and to give him some attention. We find that many children who are more or less "loners" love to go to the pets and talk and cuddle to them, and when they think nobody else is watching, sometimes you can see them pick up a guinea pig or go to little Spunky the hamster and talk to him. Many times they'll say things to the animals that they would really like to say to someone else. This, in effect, really becomes their friend.

BLAIR: Librarian Rose Baker, talking with Charles Cromwell of station KASU in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

MERROW: We've talked about school libraries and public libraries -- but what about your own libraries at home? Almost everyone has books at home, and buying the right books can be expensive. Dave Galletly of station WAMC in Albany asked associate library professor Dorothy Cole how to select good resource material for the home.

DOROTHY COLE

COLE: I would think that one should look for a set that is published by a standard reputable publisher, one which has many articles that are signed by contributors, and contributors who are experts in the various fields of knowledge. It should have a good index; it should be well illustrated; it should have bibliographies at the end of articles; it should be written in the style that is suitable for the audience for which it is intended. And, of course, all of the recommended encyclopedias -- that is, recommended by the American Library Association, put out a new version every year which has new material and revised material.

GALLETLY: One of the most common ways a family obtains an encyclopedia is through the home salesperson. We've all heard or have heard of the seller who is working his or her way through school through the sale of these books, or that your child will be exposed to the greatest amount of knowledge with this particular set.

COLE: I think in this field, as in so many others, we all ought to be enlightened consumers, not just to buy the first product that comes to hand. These reference books are in libraries, and librarians are more than glad to talk to people who are considering buying reference books. Now, no librarian is going to recommend a particular

one. That simply would not be ethical, but the librarian will show people the recommended sets and explain their various characteristics.

GALLETLY: But once you have your new encyclopedia, one that reflects what you want from it, don't think you have the entire world at your fingertips. To round out your home reference collection, Professor Cole recommends a good unabridged dictionary, a fact book -- or almanac, and an atlas. Of course, even then, occasionally, you might not find exactly what you're looking for. When that does happen, remember the reference section of your local public library is usually just a phone call away. For National Public Radio, this is Dave Galletly in Albany, New York.

MERROW: What books do you have?

CHILD: I don't know.

MERROW: Why did you pick them if you don't know what they are?

CHILD: I like them -- they're insretting.

MERROW: Huh?

CHILD: They're insretting.

MERROW: They're interesting.

CHILD: Yeah.

MERROW: This one is called Bridges and Tunnels.

CHILD: Briggin and Tunnis?

MERROW: Tunnels.

CHILD: Tunnels.

MERROW: This looks like a scary one. It's called The Haunted Spy. Tell me why you picked that one.

CHILD: Because I like spooky things.

(MUSIC)

MERROW: Material for this program came from Craig Oliver of station WAMU in Washington, Dave Galletly of station WAMC in Albany, Mark Poindexter of KCUR in Kansas City, and David Freudberg of WGBH in Boston.

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BLAIR: Before we give that address again we'd like to ask you to help us improve OPTIONS IN EDUCATION. We'll send a questionnaire to everyone who writes us. We really want to hear your views about education and this series. Write us. Our address, National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D.C. 20036.

(MUSIC)

CHILD: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a co-production of the Institute for Educational Leadership at the George Washington University and National Public Radio.

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BLAIR: This program is produced by Jo Ellyn Rackleff. The Executive Producer is John Merrow. For OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, I'm Wendy Blair.

CHILD: This is NPR -- National Public Radio.